

CHAPTER 1

# Admissions





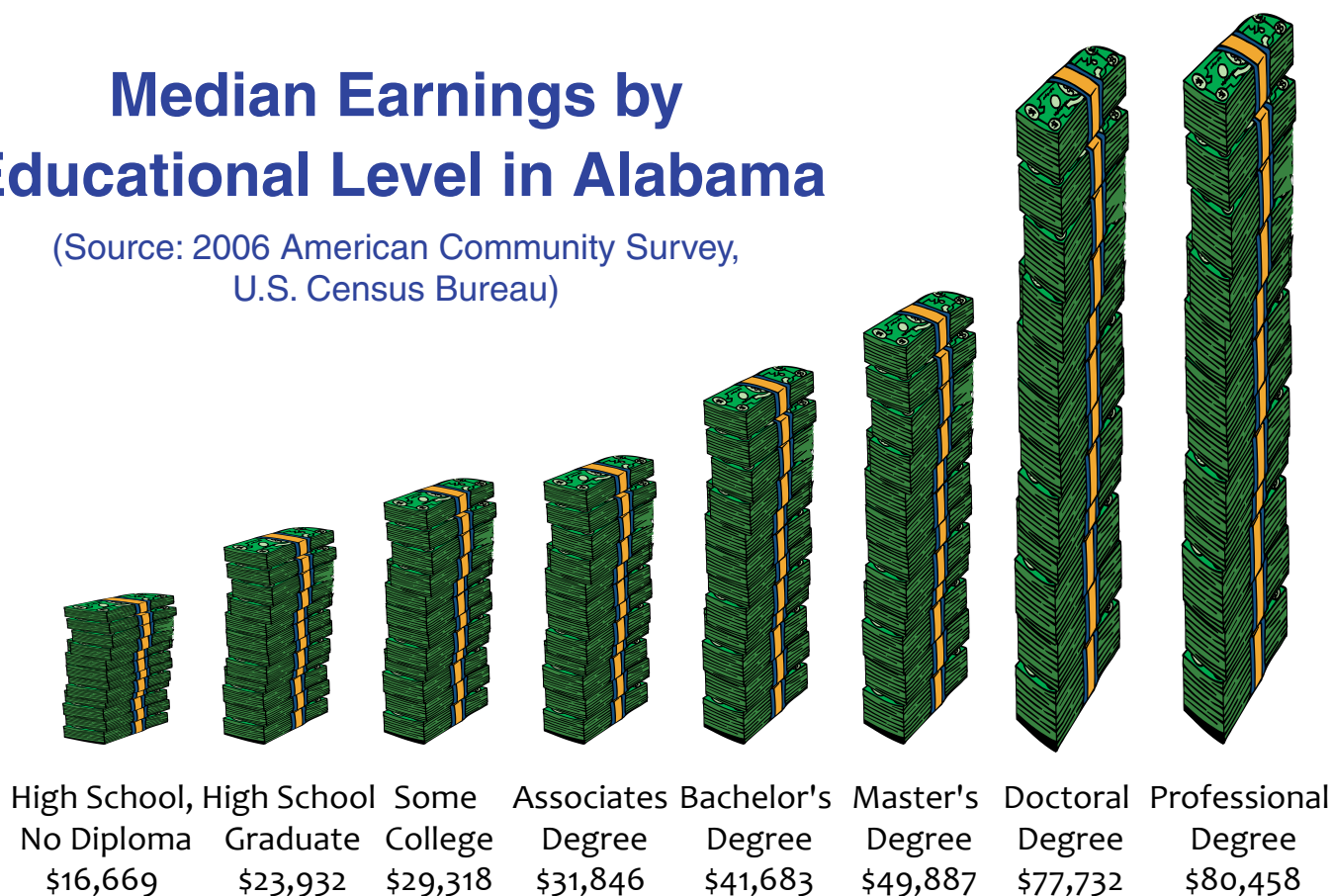
# Wow...

Someone who earns a bachelor's degree will make an average of about \$18,000 more each year than someone with just a high school diploma. Over a 40-year working lifetime, that's an additional...

## \$720,000

## Median Earnings by Educational Level in Alabama

(Source: 2006 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau)



This graph gives the 2006 median earnings of people in Alabama over age 25, both sexes, who work year-round at a full-time job, based on their level of education. A median is a middle value, so the number of people earning less than the median is equal to the number of people earning more than the median.





# TEST TIME

Entrance/placement tests: you probably don't care for them. Unfortunately, you'll have to take one to get into college. Chapter 3 lists most of the schools in Alabama and which tests, if any, they require. You may have already taken the NMSQT and the PSAT. Those were just warm-ups for the ACT and SAT.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ACT AND SAT?

The ACT and SAT are the twin titans of college entrance exams. Nearly all of Alabama's public universities and four-year private colleges require that you take one of them.

The **ACT** has multiple-choice questions in English, math, reading and science reasoning, plus an optional writing test. Scores range from 1 to 36. The ACT doesn't count off for a wrong answer, so it's okay to guess if you have no clue what the right answer is. For more information, visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

There are two types of **SAT** tests — the SAT Reasoning Test and the SAT Subject Tests. Do not guess on the SAT! The SAT counts off for wrong answers.

The SAT Reasoning Test has three sections: critical reading, math and writing, which includes an essay. Scores range from 200 to 800 on each section. For more information, visit [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATI.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATI.html).

The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests in specific subjects. Check with the school you plan to attend to see if any are required. For more information, visit [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATII.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATII.html).

## WHAT ARE THOSE OTHER TESTS FOR?

Most Alabama two-year community colleges require the ACT ASSET or ACT COMPASS.

The **ACT ASSET** is a series of short placement tests. For more information, visit [www.act.org/asset/index.html](http://www.act.org/asset/index.html).

The ACT Computerized Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System (COMPASS) is a series of tests given on computer that cover mathematics, reading, writing skills and English as a second language. For more information, visit [www.act.org/compass/index.html](http://www.act.org/compass/index.html).

## ANY OTHERS?

Trade schools in Alabama may require the ACT, SAT, COMPASS or ASSET. Here are two other entrance exams required by some trade schools:

The Career Programs Assessment (CPAt) measures skills in language, reading and math and takes about an hour. For more information, visit [www.act.org/cpat/index.html](http://www.act.org/cpat/index.html).

The Wonderlic Basic Skills Test uses language and math questions to measure a student's ability to solve problems and understand instructions. The test takes less than an hour to complete and can be taken either online or with pencil and paper, depending on the school. For more information, visit [www.wonderlic.com](http://www.wonderlic.com).

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THESE TESTS?

The best way to prepare for the ACT and SAT is to take challenging courses in high school, study and learn.

There are other things you can do that'll help. You can take practice tests online, or you can buy a book of practice tests for use at home. Some high schools and colleges offer ACT/SAT prep classes for free or a small fee. Familiarize yourself with the sections and directions.

Get plenty of rest the night before, eat a good breakfast that morning, and whatever you do, don't forget your No. 2 pencils and an ID!

## ANY FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM?

Yes, remember that the ACT doesn't count off for a wrong answer, so it's OK to guess if you have no clue what the right answer is.

But **DO NOT** guess on the SAT. The SAT counts off for wrong answers on some sections. If you can narrow your choices down to two, you might want to pick one.

# TEST DATES

## Entrance/Placement Tests

Test Name	Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration <sup>1</sup>	Registration Fee <sup>2</sup>
<b>ACT</b>	October 25, 2008 December 13, 2008 February 7, 2009 April 4, 2009 June 13, 2009	September 19, 2008 November 7, 2008 January 6, 2009 February 27, 2009 May 8, 2009	Sept. 20–Oct. 3, 2008 Nov. 8–20, 2008 Jan. 7–16, 2009 Feb. 28–Mar. 13, 2009 May 9–22, 2009	\$30, w/o writing \$44.50, w/ writing  Late registration fee: Additional \$19
<b>SAT Reasoning and SAT Subjects Tests</b>	<b>Saturdays<sup>3</sup>:</b> October 4, 2008 December 6, 2008 January 24, 2009 May 2, 2009 June 6, 2009	September 9, 2008 November 5, 2008 December 26, 2008 March 31, 2009 May 5, 2009	Check with your guidance counselor	Check with your guidance counselor
<b>SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject, includes language tests with listening<sup>4</sup></b>	November 1, 2008	October 1, 2008		
<b>SAT Reasoning only</b>	March 14, 2009	February 10, 2009		
<b>ASSET, COMPASS, CPAt, Wonderlic</b>	At the school's discretion	Not applicable	Not applicable	Check with admissions office

## Tests for College Credits

Test Name	Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration <sup>1</sup>	Registration Fee <sup>2</sup>
<b>AP</b>	<b>Monday-Friday<sup>5</sup>:</b> May 4-8, 2009 May 11-15, 2009  Different subject each day, a.m. & p.m.	Check with your guidance counselor before April 1	Check with your guidance counselor	\$84 with \$22 fee reduction for low-income students
<b>IB</b>	External examinations for candidates for the IB diploma are given in May and November.	Check with your guidance counselor	Check with your guidance counselor	Check with your guidance counselor
<b>CLEP<sup>®</sup></b>	Exams may be administered at any time during the year	Check with the local test center about registration procedures	Not applicable	\$70 per test (Testing facility may charge additional fees)

<sup>1</sup> Additional fee required.

<sup>2</sup> Subject to change. Check websites (see page 3) for current fees. See your guidance counselor for information about fee waivers for students from low-income families.

<sup>3</sup> Sunday administration will occur the day after each Saturday administration.

<sup>4</sup> The Language Tests with Listening are offered in November only.

<sup>5</sup> Students who want to take exams scheduled for the same time slot should ask their AP coordinator to call AP Services at 609.771.7300 for information about taking one of the exams on an alternate date.

# SCHOOL CHOICES

## WHICH SCHOOL SHOULD I ATTEND?

You and your parents will have to make that decision based on lots of things — how much it costs, how good an education it offers and how far away it is, etc.

You should find out everything you can about each school that interests you. Check out their websites first, then go for a visit, preferably while classes are in session. Use the checklist in the back of the book as a guide.

Which college you choose will depend on how you answer questions such as:

- Do I want to be close to home?
- Do I want a greater variety of choices at a large university or the personal environment of a smaller school?
- Which school has the best program for my major?
- Do I want to start off at a community college to get the basics out of the way first?
- How much can my family and I afford to spend on my education?
- How safe will I be on campus? (Hint: Ask the school for a copy of its campus security report.)

No matter what your answers, you'll probably be able to find a school that fits you perfectly.



# DIPLOMA OR DEGREE?



Think of your goals. Your future employers will consider what kind of degree you have earned. Knowing what you want to take away from college will help you narrow down your school choices.

Type	Program Length	Description
Certificate	6–18 months	Nondegree programs usually in a vocational or technical area.
Diploma	15 months–2 years	Nondegree programs usually in a vocational or technical area.
Associate Degree	2–3 years	<p>(1) Associate in applied science (AAS) and associate of applied technology (AAT) degrees in technological and vocational majors. These usually won't transfer toward a four-year degree.</p> <p>(2) Associate of arts (AA) or associate of science (AS) degrees in non-vocational and vocational areas. These will usually transfer to four-year colleges and can be applied toward a bachelor's degree.</p>
Bachelor's Degree	4–5 years	The most common are the bachelor of arts (BA) and the bachelor of science (BS).
Master's Degree	Bachelor's degree plus at least 1 year	A master's is typically the first graduate degree you can earn after a bachelor's. Many public school teachers have a master's degree.
Doctoral Degree	Bachelor's degree plus at least 3 years	Programs usually consist of course work, independent research and dissertation or other formal presentation.
First Professional Degree	6 or more years (including at least 2 years of college for entrance)	These include degrees in law, medicine, pharmacy and theology/divinity.



# COLLEGE TALK

*These definitions will help you decide the kind of school you want to attend.*

**COLLEGE:** Any school that offers education after high school or a subdivision of a university, like the College of Business. Colleges do not have to offer graduate degrees.

**HIGHER EDUCATION:** Any education after high school. We usually use *college*.

**POSTBACCALAUREATE:** After a bachelor's degree.

**POSTSECONDARY:** Education after high school.

**PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES:** Generally, these provide the greatest variety of programs. All offer undergraduate and graduate degrees, and some offer professional degrees in medicine, dentistry, law and other fields. Some also offer associate's degrees.

If you want a great education for less money and don't mind having some large classes, this might be just the place for you. Your on-campus social opportunities are usually greater too. From sororities and fraternities to clubs and major sporting events, the choices are numerous.

**PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:** If you like smaller classes and greater access to faculty, you might want to consider one of Alabama's private universities or colleges.

These schools all offer bachelor's degrees, while some also offer associate's and advanced degrees. Some private schools have joint programs with public universities in specialized fields.

Private schools generally cost more than public universities, but financial aid is available to help with the costs. Because they're usually smaller than public universities, you may have more opportunities to participate in sports, music groups and other activities.

**PUBLIC TWO-YEAR COLLEGES:** Community and technical colleges offer several cost-effective options. You can start your education at a community college, earn an associate degree and transfer to a four-year school to complete your bachelor's degree. Another option is to earn a certificate, diploma or associate degree at a community/technical college and move right into the job market. These programs can take from six months to three years to complete.

A big advantage of attending a community or technical college is that you can usually find a two-year school near you, meaning you can save money by living at home.

**TRADE SCHOOLS:** These are more properly called proprietary schools and are considered a fast track to a career. Trade schools are privately owned and licensed. They offer programs in business, trade, technical, industrial and related areas. Some schools offer only one area of study; others offer programs in several areas.

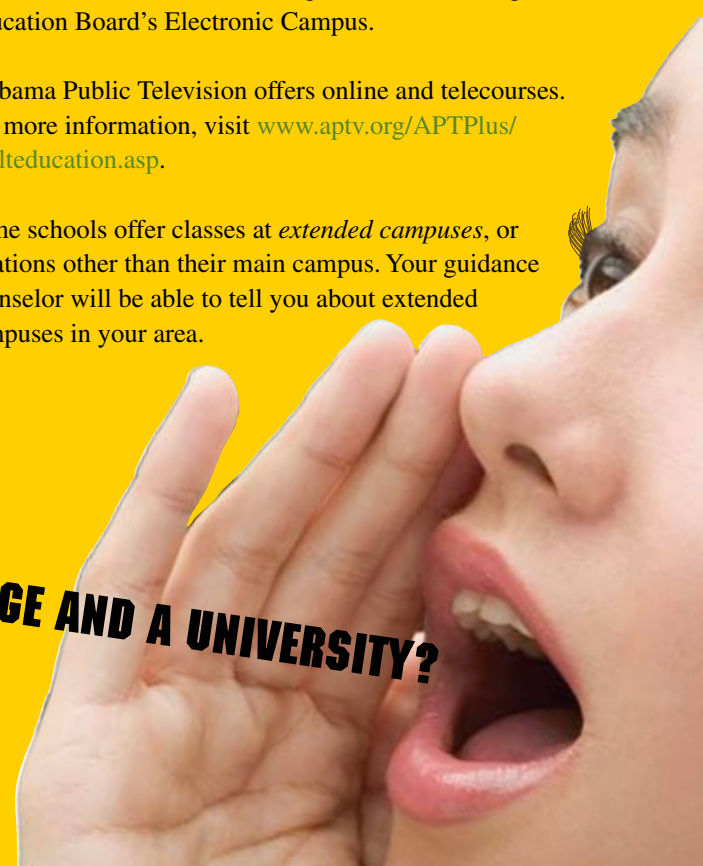
**DISTANCE LEARNING:** You can take courses and even earn degrees *without* the traditional on-campus experience. Distance learning includes courses and degrees offered through television, correspondence, CDs, interactive satellite and the Internet.

Online courses are offered through the Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic Campus.

Alabama Public Television offers online and telecourses. For more information, visit [www.aptv.org/APTPlus/adulteducation.asp](http://www.aptv.org/APTPlus/adulteducation.asp).

Some schools offer classes at *extended campuses*, or locations other than their main campus. Your guidance counselor will be able to tell you about extended campuses in your area.

**WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COLLEGE AND A UNIVERSITY?**



# ONLINE DEGREES

**YOU CAN TAKE CLASSES AND EARN DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES — ALL FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME — WITH SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD'S ELECTRONIC CAMPUS.**

Alabama is one of 16 member states, so you can earn selected online degrees from schools in other SREB states. Some participating schools charge out-of-state tuition for nonresidents; others charge a single tuition rate for all students regardless of residence.

All courses at the *Electronic Campus* are accredited, but before you try to transfer these credits, consult your advisors — both at your online school and the school to which you want to transfer the credit.

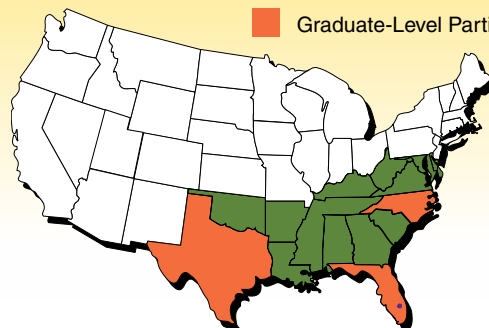
For more information and an up-to-date list of programs, visit [www.electroniccampus.org](http://www.electroniccampus.org).

The SREB's **Academic Common Market/*Electronic Campus Initiative*** provides online degrees from out-of-state schools at in-state tuition rates for programs approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

If you need financial aid to pay for online courses, contact the school offering them. Federal rules are changing to reflect the popularity of online learning, so financial aid may be available.

About 150 schools from the following states participate at the undergraduate and graduate levels: **ALABAMA, ARKANSAS, DELAWARE, GEORGIA, KENTUCKY, LOUISIANA, MARYLAND, MISSISSIPPI, OKLAHOMA, SOUTH CAROLINA, TENNESSEE, VIRGINIA** and **WEST VIRGINIA**. **FLORIDA, NORTH CAROLINA** and **TEXAS** participate at the graduate level. For information about and certification for the Academic Common Market, write to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, P.O. Box 302000, Montgomery, AL 36130-2000; call (334) 242-2209; or visit [www.ache.state.al.us/sreb/Guidelines.pdf](http://www.ache.state.al.us/sreb/Guidelines.pdf).

■ Academic Common Market States  
■ Graduate-Level Participant States





# APPLY YOURSELF

*OK, you've decided to go to college and you've picked out a school. What next?*

## APPLYING TO COLLEGE

- Get an application for admission from the school's admissions office or website.
- Complete and return the application.
- Pay close attention to deadlines. Addresses, phone numbers, websites and e-mail addresses for Alabama colleges are provided in **Chapter 3**, as are the deadlines for each school.

Have your **transcript** sent to the school. Get a housing application if you're going to live on campus and submit it as soon as possible. Find out about **deposits, orientation** and **registering for classes**. After you've been accepted, notify the school of your decision to attend and let the other schools you've applied to know you won't be attending.

If you have questions or don't understand something, ask your parents, guidance counselor or the admissions director at the school.

Remember when we discussed tests? Let's apply that information. Find your college in **Chapter 3** and see what tests are required and the deadline for submitting the results. Be sure to confirm this information with the school. If you haven't taken the tests, check the chart on the **Test Dates** page to find out dates, registration deadlines and fees. If you've taken the test, check with the school to make sure it has your results. ***It's up to you*** to make sure you've taken the correct tests and that the results have been reported to your school.

## EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION

This is for students trying to beat the competition into the really selective schools.

With **EARLY DECISION**, you make a commitment to enroll in a certain school (provided they admit you). You have to withdraw all other applications and make a nonrefundable deposit. A possible disadvantage to Early Decision is that it may take away your leverage in negotiating a better financial aid package.

With **EARLY ACTION**, you apply to your preferred school and receive a decision before the normal response date.

For more information about **EARLY DECISION** and **EARLY ACTION**, contact the admissions office of the school you're interested in attending. You can also contact the National Association for College Admission Counseling, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818; call (800) 822-6285 or (703) 836-2222; or visit [www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/News/StepsNewsletter/early\\_decision.htm](http://www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/News/StepsNewsletter/early_decision.htm).



# ADMISSIONS ESSAY

A yellow pencil lies horizontally across the middle of the page. Below it, the spiral binding of a notebook is visible, curving from the bottom left towards the center. The background is a solid yellow color with a subtle texture.

If you apply to a private college or university, chances are you'll be asked to write a brief admission essay as part of the admissions process.

For the most part, college admissions officers want to know a little bit more about you as a person and find out how well you write.

Some colleges will give you a specific topic, such as telling them how attending their school will help you achieve your goals in life. Others may ask you to choose from several topics, while some will let you pick the topic yourself.

If you pick the topic yourself, write something that will give the admissions officer reading the essay some insight into your thoughts and abilities — and that will make the officer say, “We want this student on our campus.”

“Keep the reader in mind — be original,” said an admissions officer at one private school. “The admissions staff member reads hundreds of essays. What will make yours stand out? Avoid topics that everyone else will write about.”

Another admissions officer suggested essays that tell a story, rather than research papers or poems.

After you've written a creative essay that lets the reader know about you, polish it. You'll do a lot of writing while you're in college, and colleges want students who already have a good grasp of writing mechanics.

As one admissions officer said, “We look for grammar and complete sentences, the ability to put cohesive thoughts on paper.” That means proofread your essay and have others proofread it too. Ask your English teacher or counselor to look it over for errors.

Above all, follow the directions. Too many students don't pay attention to the guidelines on length, format, etc. Not following the directions may cost you the chance to attend the school you really want to go to.



# MOVING ON UP

## TRANSFERRING BETWEEN COLLEGES

Let's say you start off at an Alabama public college with plans to transfer to another one later on. Your big question: "Will my credits transfer?"

Yes, they will — if you follow the guidelines of the Alabama Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) and the STARS Computer Advising System, a web-based database at <http://stars.troy.edu> that provides AGSC transfer information.

AGSC has established credit-hour distribution requirements for freshman/sophomore general studies that are accepted by every public college and university in the state. Follow these requirements and you won't lose any credits when you transfer between Alabama public colleges.

Even better are the transfer templates they've created for many majors. A template lists all courses for a particular major and specifies what courses to take the first two years. Following this template guarantees that your credits will be accepted and applied toward your degree by the school you transfer to.

If your major has a template, you and your advisor will have no trouble deciding what classes to take before you transfer. A list of majors with pre-approved templates can be found at <http://stars.troy.edu/AGSC/AreaVTmp.htm>. To learn more about the requirements for your major, consult a college catalog or your advisor.

Keep in mind — completing these courses does not guarantee that you will be accepted at another school or, if you are accepted, that you'll be admitted to that major. In addition, students are encouraged to choose a major early and stay with it. Changing majors can cause you to lose course credit and have to go back to pick up needed requirements.

For more information about transfer, visit the STARS website at <http://stars.troy.edu> or call (334) 670-3690.

## OTHER TRANSFERS

**DO NOT** rely on AGSC guidelines if you're transferring from an Alabama public college to an Alabama private college or to an out-of-state college. The AGSC guidelines are for transfers between Alabama public colleges only.

If you're planning to transfer out of state or to an in-state private college:

- Consult an advisor at the college where you plan to complete your degree
- Find out that school's transfer requirements
- Give this information to your advisor at your first school

The advisor at your first school will then be able to help you pick courses that will transfer, but *it's your responsibility* to make sure your advisor gets this information.

AGSC Credit Hour Distribution Requirements for Alabama Public Colleges		
Area	General Studies	Hours
I	Written Composition	10 quarter or 6 semester
II	Humanities and Fine Arts	20 quarter or 6 semester
III	Natural Sciences and Mathematics	15 quarter or 11 semester
IV	History and Social and Behavioral	20 quarter or 12 semester
V	Professional, Pre-Major and Elective Courses	31 quarter or 19–23 semester